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The need for medium for circulating church news is at the present time more pressing than ever, and an objective international news-service is of decisive importance for ecumenical endeavour. For a number of years the Northern countries have increasingly benefitted from church news bulletins published in other countries, but at the same time this has led to a deeper realization of the fact that there is a need in other countries for more information concerning the churches and Christian groups in the Northern countries.

It is this situation that has led to the decision of the Northern Ecumenical Institute to publish a monthly news-sheet in English and German, and we now have the pleasure of forwarding you the first copy. CHURCH NEWS will contain a short survey of current events and statements concerning the church affairs of the Lutheran National Churches as well as the Free Churches and the Christian organizations in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. The information contained in this news-service is freely placed at the disposal of the readers.

Seeing that the Northern countries and their churches have a farreaching fellowship, it is natural that the coverage offered by this news-service should comprehend all the Northern countries. However, this does not mean that they wish to isolate themselves from other countries and their churches, and we hope that this news-service may also be a contributory factor in establishing a stronger and more living fellowship between all Christian churches.

It is with the sincere hope that this wish may be fulfilled that we publish this first number of CHURCH NEWS.

For the Northern Ecumenical Institute:

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Cathedrals excavated in Iceland and on the Faroe Islands.

Two most interesting excavations have been carried out this year in Iceland and on the Faroe Islands. In Skålholt, Iceland, the remains of the old cathedral which was built about 1300 A.D. were uncovered. The cathedral was built entirely of wood brought from Norway and measured no less than 164 feet in length. The finding of Bishop Pall Jonsson's tomb made quite a sensation in Iceland. The Bishop who died in 1211 lay in a stone sarchophagus together with his pastoral staff, the haft of which was made of walrus tusk.

On the Faroe Islands the remains of a huge medieval episcopal residence in Kirkjubø have been excavated. The ruins consist of a cathedral, which was never completed owing to a conflict between the people and the bishop, two other churches, and the bishop's palace with its two buildings, one of which is about 165 feet long. The whole group of buildings was built of stone.

DENMARK

Church programmes on television.

Danish Television, which works in close co-operation with the Danish State Radio, now has daily transmissions for 1 - 2 hours daily. The first real religious programme on television was a performance of the church drama "Prophet and Carpenter" written by the Swedish clergyman and author Olov Hartman, and acted by 9 pastors of Copenhagen. The play attracted much attention throughout Denmark when these nine pastors toured the country with it a short time ago.

Danish Television has requested the editor Tage Christiansen to organize a monthly transmission about the old Danish churches, their history, architecture, and furnishings. The first transmission in this series has already taken place and was given a very fine reception by the press. Mr. Christiansen is known from a corresponding series of high quality in the radio.

East German cathedral choir visits Denmark.

The Cathedral Choir from Greifswald in East Germany under the leadership of Hans Pflugbeil has been touring a number of Danish cities by invitation of the Church of Denmark Council on Inter-Church Relations. The Cathedral Choir was received with great enthusiasm, not only on account of its musical performances, but also because this visit signified a new bound between the Danish and East German churches. The Cathedral Choir was accompanied by the president of the Pommeranian Church, Dr. Rautenberg.

Danish missionary to become bishop in Pakistan.

The Danish Lutheran Mission to the Pathans, which has its centre in Mardan, Pakistan, will probably next year enter into church fellowship with the American Lutheran Mission in the same area.

The American and the Danish missions have both expressed the wish that the Danish missionary the Rev. Jens Christensen, who has served for many years in the Mission to the Pathans, should be elected the first bishop of the united church. The annual assembly of the Mission to the Pathans has recently approved the plans for this union, and it seems probable that Bishop Gudmund Schiøler, Roskilde, will be the representative of the Danish Church at the instalment of the Rev. Jens Christensen which is to take place in the autumn of 1955.

The union will make it possible to give better training to pastors, evangelists, and teachers, and will also strengthen the mission in its relations with the Mohammedan State.

Christian university on Sumatra to be named after Dane.

The Batak-Church in Indonesia comprising some 600.000 members in 1.100 congregations is now erecting a Christian University on Sumatra and the University is to be named after the Danish missionary, Ludwig J. Nommensen, who was sent out in 1862 by a German mission society and became "the apostle to the Bataks". To complete the first stage of the building the sum of 1.000.000 kr. must be raised, and it is estimated that in all the University will cost about seven times that amount. The founding of the new University is supported by the Lutheran World Federation and it is to have faculties of Divinity, Law, Medicine, and Arts.

Inter-communion between Scotland and Denmark.

As a result of negotiations between the Church of Scotland and the Danish Lutheran National Church, inter-communion between these churches has been achieved. The initial correspondance on this subject between Professor D.M. Baillie and the Danish Bishop Skat Hoffmeyer was followed by a discussion in the Danish Bishops' Conference. And now Bishop Dr. Fuglsang-Damgaard has informed Professor Baillie on behalf of the bishops that the Danish Church sees no reason why members of the Church of Scotland should not be allowed to partake of the communion in the Danish National Church; and, similarly, there is nothing to prevent Danes from participating in the communion services of the Church of Scotland.

The Church's practice of infant baptism in danger?

It is only with much misgiving that we can continue to practise infant baptism, if baptism is not followed by any real instruction in Christianity, was the opinion expressed by Dean Paul Brodersen, Copenhagen, at a recent church service in connection with a meeting of the deans of that city. There is in Denmark a widespread ignorance of Christian teachings, said the Dean, and among other things he pointed out that the religious education in the schools (which is given by the schools' own teachers) is not always what one might desire. He appealed to the responsibility of the homes toward the children baptized as infants, and raised the question whether it was not the duty of the church to emphasize more strongly than is now the case its function of imparting religious instruction to young people as well as adults and not to confine itself to preaching.

Danish Seamen's Church growing rapidly.

The Church for Danish Seamen in Foreign Ports is growing rapidly at the present time. Whereas in 1945 there were only 7 stations, 2 of which had been ruined in the War, and only 5 pastors and 2 assistants, there are now 12 stations in operation with 13 pastors and 5 assistants. 3 of the pastors have been sent out by the Seamen's Church in co-operation with other Church institutions.

The Danish Seamen's Church is a voluntary church organization; its funds are raised by collections in Danish churches, through the activity of specially interested groups and by grants from the Danish State. In the years after the War a close co-operation has developed between the Seamen's Missions in the Northern countries, and together they have undertaken work in ports where Northern ships now dock in larger numbers than before. Thus the Norwegian Seamen's Mission serves all Scandinavian sailors in Kobe and Hongkong, while the Danish Seamen's Church has opened a station in Yokohama. In Rotterdam a Danish pastor is serving a Swedish seamen's church, and in Gent a Swedish clergyman is serving a Danish seamen's church. The number of participants in the church services and other gatherings has been steadily increasing in the past years.

News flashes.

- The Danish pastor Chr. Christiansen, who is a leader of the Lutheran World Federation's relief work among the Arab refugees in Syria, has been awarded the Syrian medal of merit, Istihqaq of the 2nd order.

- The University of Copenhagen has appointed two new theological professors: Dr. Torben Christensen to the chair of Church History, and Dr. Bent Noach to the chair of New Testament. The new professors are respectively 33 and 39 years old.

- Dean C. Nedermark, who was for many years chairman of the Danish Church in Foreign Ports, has died. He was 61 years old.

- The Danish Christian Student Movement has decided to gather old members from the whole country for a conference next summer, one of the purposes being to activate university graduates in their local congregations.

FINLAND

New Finnish bishop.

A successor to Bishop Väinö Malmivaara in Uleåborg, who rounded his 75th birthday on November 7th, has been appointed. He is the Rev. O.K. Heliövaara who has been an elected member of the Church Council since 1944. The new bishop is to be installed soon after New Year.

Ecumenical Institute in Helsingfors.

The theological faculty at the University of Helsingfors is planning to expand with two new theological institutes in the near

future. The first is to be an ecumenical institute where students and pastors can specialize in ecumenical questions. The institute is expected to open within the next two years.

Finnish pamphlet on World Lutheranism.

The Finnish committee of the Lutheran World Federation has published a small pamphlet on World Lutheranism. The pamphlet contains articles by Professors Aimo T. Nikolainen, W.A. Schmidt, and Bishop Max von Bonsdorff on the position of Lutheranism at the present day, the Lutheran World Federation, and the World Federation conference in Hannover respectively.

Finnish bishop on Moral Re-Armament.

The Finnish Bishop Elis Gulin had the opportunity of visiting the Moral Re-Armament conference at Mackinac Island before attending the conference of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, and he says of that movement:

- MRA provides the deepest fellowship I have ever experienced in any Christian group in the world. When Dr. Frank Buchman started this world-wide movement, he placed the Cross of Christ at its centre. He did away with the misunderstanding that the Cross is a soporific and emphasized that it is a spear-point penetrating our own self-sufficiency and our tendency to take life easy. No Christian organization or movement in our time has been able to bring the crucified Christ home to men so vividly as the MRA. The Cross of Christ stands at the heart of all of MRA's activities. It is not often spoken of, but it remains MRA's source of inspiration.

Christian missions the only bridge between the races.

The Finnish Bishop Martti Simojoki has been on a two months tour of the Finnish mission fields in the Ambo district and in Okawango in South West Africa. Speaking from his experiences, the Bishop stated on his return that Christian missions are the only bridge that exists between the different races of the world. The Bishop further stressed that it is not Western civilization, but the Gospel of Christ that the mission hopes to bring to Africa. The Gospel itself will then create a new and genuinely African culture.

During his stay the Bishop ordained 14 new African pastors, so that there are now 47 in all. There are in addition 60 Finnish missionaries, of whom 10 are pastors, on this mission field. About 80.000 of the 200.000 inhabitants of the Ambo district are now Christians.

About 150 Finnish missionaries in action.

According to a recent survey the Lutheran National Church in Finland has at the present time 97 missionaries at work in many parts of the globe, of these 60 in the Ambo district in South West Africa. The Pentecostal Mission comes next with a total of 46 missionaries and the other free churches together have 15 missionaries in the field.

NORWAY

A message to the Church and people from Norway's bishops.

The assembly of the Norwegian bishops on the 17th of November voted to issue a proclamation to the people and the Church of Norway, dealing with a number of current problems in the Norwegian Church. The proclamation, which has now been published, has been signed by all the Norwegian bishops with the sole exception of Bishop Kristian Schjelderup who is at present on sick-leave.

With reference to the religious controversies that have lately awakened so much interest, pre-eminent among which is the Church's teaching on eternal damnation, the proclamation says:

- The Church must not become a prey to the ferment and controversies of the times, nor to internal confusion and dissension. If there is anything that may rightly be demanded both by the Lord of the Church and modern men, it is that the Church should know for what it stands and that its message should be unambigous. A Church that weakens itself in internal conflicts or lets itself be guided by popular opinions instead of proclaiming the truth, has already failed in its duty, nor will it be able to retain common respect. For the Church has only one Lord: Christ; and only one authority: His Word ...

On the subject of eternal damnation it states that the relevant words of Scripture must be seen in the light of the Gospel of God's saving will. Here, if anywhere, the bishops say, we are confronted with matters in which our wisdom comes to naught, where we can only listen humbly to Him who has all knowledge. With piercing gravity and an authority that silences every protest, He tells us that there are two possible terminations to human life.

The bishops also deal with the relation between Church and State in Norway, and they vigourously protest against the view of the State's authority in Church affairs that was expressed last year in the memorandum by the Professor of Law Castberg - he maintained that the Government according to the Constitution should have the right to alter the rituals of the State Church, to abolish the regulations concerning ordination, and even to remove certain articles of faith from the religious education given in the schools. The bishops emphasize the fact that both congregations and pastors realize the values inherent in the existing connection between the State and the Church, and that there is no great desire to bring the old relationship to an end. But at the same time the German occupation and the post-war years have made more evident to the Church the limits defining the possibility and the justifiability of maintaining a State Church. Here, too, the limit is imposed by the Lord of the Church and by the authority possessed by the Church in the World of God. State domination of the confession, the teaching, and the spiritual life of the Church is equally intolerable, whether it be imposed upon the Church by an unlawful government as during the occupation, or it is claimed to be constitutionally possible for the lawful government as in Castberg's memorandum. In the latter case the situation would even be doubtly serious, as that which would be

untenable in any case would then receive legal authorization.

Common hymnbook for the whole of Norway?

There is much that seems to indicate that in the course of a few years it will be possible to introduce a common hymnbook for use by the entire Lutheran State Church in Norway. Hitherto, two different hymnbooks have been in use due to the two different forms of spoken Norwegian. The Norwegian Government has appointed a committe of seven members with Bishop Johs. Smemo, Oslo, as chairman to investigate the possibility of introducing a new common hymnbook. Three of the seven members served in an earlier committee appointed by the Bishops' Conference and in this capacity they unanimously proposed a common hymnbook with hymns printed in both language forms.

Protests against two Norwegian bills.

Two bills that have been introduced in the Norwegian parliament have aroused a storm of protest from churchmen. One is a proposal for a new bill to regulate the activity of quacks, in which there is a paragraph so formulated that it may easily raise legal obstruction to the practice of faith-healing. The other bill seeks to abolish a paragraph in the penal code which prescribes a penalty for those who in spite of warning continue in extra-martial cohabitation that gives offence. A number of Christian organizations and several of the diocesan councils have protested against these bills, the latest development being a request by the Norwegian bishops gathered in council in November by the Storting asking it not to abolish the so-called "concubinage paragraph", as they believe it to be a protection of the institution of marriage.

35.000 Christian organizations in Norway.

Norway is pre-eminently the country of Christian organizations. This is shown by a survey recently carried out by the Christian daily paper in Oslo Vårt Land. According to this survey the various Christian organizations (chiefly for Foreign and Home Missions) have in all 29.600 local associations. In addition to these there are all the societies connected with the local congregations and the Free Church associations. The number of the latter is estimated at 5.000, so that the total number of Christian organizations must be about 35.000. The paper is of the opinion that there are, on an average, at least 15 - 20 members in each society, so that in all at least 6 - 700.000 are participating in Christian organizational activities. - And this does not take into account the 4.160 Sunday schools with in all 254.000 children.

Refugee children visit Norway.

Since the summer of 1949 the work among refugees sponsored by Norway's Christian Youth Organization has made it possible for 846 refugee boys to stay in Norway for periods of varying duration either in private homes or in a special camp 'Strandheim' . In 1954 2.215 boys were invited, and of these 105 of the youngest were placed in private homes and the rest at 'Strandheim'. The boys belonged to nine different nations, but all came from Germany or Austria.

Bible school in Japan dedicated to the memory of Ludvig Hope.

A boardmeeting of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission Society has decided to build a new Bible school in Japan in memory of the late Norwegian layman-leader Ludvig Hope. The Bible school, which is to be situated at Kobe, is to be a visible witness to the gratitude felt in Norwegian mission circles toward Mr. Hope, and it is proposed to start a collection for this purpose in the near future.

The Emperor of Ethiopia grants land for mission agricultural school.

The General Secretary of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission Society, Tormod Vågen, was one of those invited to the imperial dinner at the palace in Oslo during the recent visit of the Emperor Haile Selassie in Norway. The Emperor had made a grant of a large piece of land in Southern Ethiopia for an agricultural school which the Norwegian Mission Society proposes to found with Norwegian teachers. The Emperor has also donated a site in Addis Abeba for a Lutheran folk high-school which is to be built by the Norwegians and run by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission Society in co-operation with the Swedish National Evangelical Society (Evangeliska Fosterlands-stiftelsen) and the German Hermannsburg Mission. The Lutheran World Federation has already given Ø 75.000 for this purpose.

At a meeting in Oslo the Christian temperance organizations in Scandinavia have decided to take up Christian temperance work in Ethiopia in co-operation with the mission societies.

New Norwegian translation of the New Testament.

Before New Year the Norwegian Bible Society is to publish the Acts of the Apostles in a new translation. This inaugurates the publication of a new translation of the entire New Testament which is expected to be completed in the course of a few years. The translation hitherto in use was completed in 1904, and six years ago the Bible Society decided to make arrangements for a new translation. One of the reasons leading to this decision is the fact that young people often find the old translation antiquated, and it is therefore considered necessary to provide a more modern version.

New initiatives in Norwegian Church life.

- Bishop Arne Fjellbu of Trondheim has introduced a new traditior in his diocese, an annual Bible Day. The diocesan committee of The Norwegian Bible Society is backing this new plan. The first Bible Day, which recently took place, commenced with a service in Trondheim Cathedral where the Bishop and the Pastor Primarius Olle Nystedt, Dean of Stockholm, Sweden, preached. In the afternoon and evening there were meetings dealing with the central theme: the Bible and its use.

- The local church council of Farsund, Norway, has introduced the custom of presenting all bridal couples married in the church with a leather-bound Bible as a wedding gift from the congregation. There have been many indications that this gift is deeply appreciated by the bridal couples.

- The Salvation Army in Kristianssand and the Home Mission in Bergen have begun to use buses in their Sunday school work. The buses are specially needed in the new out-lying suburbs of these towns where it is difficult to find suitable classrooms, and hundreds of children have immediately been entered in these ambulatory Sunday schools.

- A group of Norwegian laymen and pastors are endeavouring to establish something in the way of a 'Norwegian Sigtuna' (patterned on the Swedish Sigtuna Foundation) that may serve to broaden the contact between the church and cultural life. For the time being work is being carried on by means of study groups and lectures in Frederiksberg, Oslo.

- The Oslo Home Mission has decided to celebrate its centenary next year by building a combined hostel for the homeless and a school for the unemployed. The estimated cost is 3,2 million kr. and the annual expenditure is to be covered by renting out office and storage space.

- We must clothe the Gospel in tweed and thick-soled shoes, were the words of a spokesman for the Oslo Home Mission announcing a series of meetings for those who never go to church. They are to introduce a departure from the traditional form of meetings and to employ all modern aids to reach secularized people with the Gospel.

SWEDEN

Full inter-communion between England and Sweden.

The Canterbury Convention, one of the supreme bodies of the Anglican Church, has definitively confirmed inter-communion between the Anglican Church and the Swedish Lutheran National Church. As early as 1920 the Lambeth Conference recognized the validity of the apostolic succession of the Swedish Church, but the decisions dealing with inter-communion have not always been adhered to. Now it has been re-established that members of the Swedish Church who have the right to receive communion in their own church may also receive communion in the Anglican Church. It has furthermore been resolved that Swedish pastors should, when occasion arises, be allowed to speak in Anglican churches.

Many members of the Free Churches remain in the National Church.

The Swedish law on religious liberty which was passed last year has caused surprisingly few withdrawals from the Swedish National Church. Before the new law was enacted people who belonged to the Free Churches were, nevertheless, compelled to be members of the National Church, and when this was altered a rush of withdrawals was expected. But no such tendency has been felt. A few figures will serve to indicate the trend: in the arch-diocese with its 530.000 inhabitants only 1373 have withdrawn from the National Church, and in one of the large parishes in Stockholm where exceptionally large figures might have been expected, only 400 of a total population of 110.000 have withdrawn, and in another with 50.000 inhabitants only 183. - There can be no doubt that it is the traditional connection

with the National Church that has made people refrain from withdrawing.

No foreign currency for Swedish Pentecostal Broadcasts.

The Swedish Pentecostal Movement has been planning to set up a special broadcasting station for evangelistic broadcasts, but so far they have encountered insurmountable obstacles. They failed to obtain permission to transmit the broadcasts from a ship in international waters off the coast of Sweden. Then they asked the Swedish Government for permission to set up an ultra-shortwave station in Stockholm, but this too was denied them. Finally, they applied for permission to transfer the funds collected for this purpose and an American gift of money, in all nearly two million Swedish crowns, for the financing of broadcasts from Tangier radio, but this was refused by the Swedish authorities.

These repeated refusals have aroused a storm of indignation in the Pentecostal Movement, and the matter has also been taken up in the Parliament.

40 Swedish pastors home from concert tour in the U.S.A.

A choir of 40 pastors from the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden has returned from a concert tour in the U.S.A., where they have given over 50 concerts over a period of several months. The choir which has travelled all over the States from East to West has also visited a number of Swedish American congregations where it was received with much enthusiasm.

1.400 Swedish missionaries abroad.

The latest official mission survey which has been made at the initiative of the Swedish Board of Foreign Missions shows that there are 1397 Swedish missionaries on mission fields all over the world, and that they have 11.368 native assistants. The survey, which is based on information from the various mission societies, states that there were over 600.000 baptized Christians on the mission fields, and of these 27.000 were baptized in the past year. There were 78.000 pupils in Sunday schools, 112.000 in primary mission schools, 27.000 in secondary schools, and 279 in theological seminaries. The missions have 40 hospitals and these have had 49.000 patients in the course of the year. 1,1 ~~treatments~~ mill. have been given at mission clinics in the past year.

It is surprising that the Pentecostal Movement that only constitutes 1,5 % of the Swedish population has the greatest number of missionaries, 352 in all. The next largest missionary society also belongs to one of the free churches: Svenska Missionsförbundet (Mission Covenant Church of Sweden) with 204 missionaries. The Swedish Church Mission (belonging to the National Church) is the third largest with 201 missionaries, but to this total must be added 20 non-Swedish missionaries who are working on its mission fields.

Critical evaluation of the missions in China.

"There is a certain connection between the mistakes that have been made in China and the training given to missionaries. No matter

how learned a missionary may be, he may be completely ignorant of Chinese civilization and the mentality of the Chinese. Or he may have pre-conceived notions of the superiority of his own civilization. This may be pardonable in any other educated man, but not in a missionary".

These words are quoted from an article in the Swedish Mission Journal (Svensk Missionstidskrift) by Dr. Josua Sommarström. In this article, written at the instigation of the International Missionary Council, he has made a critical study of the now completed era of missions in China. The author points out that the 2 - 3.000 teachers sent out to China in the early twenties by mission societies were more concerned with propagating Western civilization than with proclaiming the Gospel. He also claims that in spite of everything missionaries were tainted with racial prejudice, so that whereas they were willing to preach to the Chinese, they were not so keen to receive them into their homes. He also maintains that the Westernized residences of the missionaries have helped to erect barriers between them and the Chinese, and that the church architecture has been too highly influenced by the West. Dr. Sommarström is of the opinion that the new culture which the missionaries should seek to develop in China ought to be founded on ancient Chinese norms and ideals, unless these are in conflict with the Christian faith, and he asks whether the many denominational and doctrinal differencies introduced by the missionaries have not been partly responsible for the present situation.

The author finally emphasizes that the aim of his article has been to point out the weaknesses without in any way detracting from the magnificent work of the missions and the self-sacrificing efforts of the missionaries.

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